

# URGENT ACTION

## HUNDREDS UNLAWFULLY HELD IN INHUMAN CONDITIONS

**Hundreds of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants of all ages are being unlawfully detained in the Reception Centre for Foreigners "Gazi Baba" in Skopje, the capital. The center is overcrowded and conditions are inhuman and degrading, with extremely limited access to adequate sanitation and healthcare. In some cases people are having to sleep on the floor. They have no access to legal aid or protection.**

Most of them, including whole families, are fleeing armed conflict in Syria and are detained so that the authorities establishing their identity and to serve as witnesses in criminal proceedings against smugglers. In some cases they are arbitrarily detained for months, some times for more than 6 months, without the possibility to challenge their detention in court.

Amnesty International has received direct and indirect reports exposing the inhuman and degrading conditions in "Gazi Baba". The reception center has an official capacity of 120 to 150 people. According to a Ministry of Interior official, around 200 individuals are normally detained in the dilapidated facility. Other sources indicated that at times up to 350 people have been detained in the center. Despite repeated calls, Amnesty International has been denied permission to visit the center.

Testimonies gathered from former detainees, photographic evidence, as well as information from international organizations have confirmed that the detention conditions in the overcrowded center are grossly inadequate. People in some cases have to sleep on the floor and access to adequate sanitation and healthcare is extremely limited. Lengthy detention periods in these conditions amounts to inhuman and degrading treatment. Automatic detention of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants is unlawful, while children, particularly unaccompanied children, should never be detained solely for migration purposes.

### **Please write immediately in English or your own language:**

- Urging the Minister of Interior to immediately stop the unlawful detention of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants at the Reception Centre for Foreigners;
- Calling on the Minister of Interior to improve the detention conditions for those individuals for whom detention is lawful, proportionate and necessary following an individualized review procedure with the possibility of appeal;
- Urging the Head of the Asylum Department to take immediate steps to provide those detained in the center with the opportunity to seek asylum, and to ensure their claims are fairly and individually assessed.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 9 APRIL 2015 TO:**

#### **Minister of Interior**

Ms Gordana Jankuloska  
Ministry of Interior  
Dimce Mircev 9.  
1000 Skopje  
Macedonia

**Fax: 011 389 2311 2468**

**Email: [gordana\\_jankuloska@moi.gov.mk](mailto:gordana_jankuloska@moi.gov.mk)**  
**mk and [kontakt@moi.gov.mk](mailto:kontakt@moi.gov.mk)**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

#### **Head of Asylum Department**

Ms Bratka Dajanovska Milcevska  
Ministry of Interior  
Dimce Mircev 9.  
1000 Skopje  
Macedonia

**Fax: 011 389 2311 2468**

**Email: [kontakt@moi.gov.mk](mailto:kontakt@moi.gov.mk)**

**Salutation: Dear Ms Milcevska**

#### **And copies to:**

**Head of Sector for Border Affairs and Migration**

Mr Marinko Kocovski  
Sector for Border Affairs and Migration  
Dimce Mircev 9.1000 Skopje  
Macedonia

**Fax: 011 389 2311 2468**

**Email: [marinko\\_kocovski@moi.gov.mk](mailto:marinko_kocovski@moi.gov.mk)**

#### **Also send copies to:**

Ambassador Zoran Jolevski, Embassy of the Republic of Macedonia  
2129 Wyoming Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008

**Fax: 1 202 667 2131 | Phone: 1 202 667 0501 | Email: [usoffice@macedonianembassy.org](mailto:usoffice@macedonianembassy.org)**

**Please let us know if you took action so that we can track our impact! EITHER send a short email to [uan@aiusa.org](mailto:uan@aiusa.org) with "UA 46/15" in the subject line, and include in the body of the email the number of letters and/or emails you sent, OR fill out this [short online form](#) (press Ctrl + click on link) to let us know how you took action. Thank you for taking action! Please check with the AIUSA Urgent Action Office if sending appeals after the above date.**

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Concerns about the length of detention and the conditions at the Reception Centre for Foreigners, as well as the detention of children, pregnant women and nursing mothers have also been expressed by the Macedonian Ombudsperson's Office, following their visits to "Gazi Baba". On International Migrants Day, 18 December 2014, the Ombudsperson recalled international standards which prohibit the detention of children, and called for them to be provided with adequate social, medical and psychological assistance.

In October 2014, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment visited the center. The publication of their report is pending the consent of the state.

Everyone, including all migrants and asylum-seekers, regardless of migration status, has the right to liberty, including protection from arbitrary arrest and detention. A presumption against detention should be established by law. Under international law, no one should be deprived of their liberty unless on grounds and in accordance with procedures established by law. The Human Rights Committee has observed that in order not to be arbitrary, the arrest and detention of migrant workers and members of their families, including those in an irregular situation, must be (a) prescribed by law, (b) necessary in the specific circumstances and (c) proportionate to the legitimate aim pursued.

Any decision restricting the right to liberty of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers must always be based on a detailed and individualized assessment, including the personal history of the individual concerned, and, as relevant, the risk of absconding, if any. Such assessment should consider the necessity and appropriateness of any restriction of liberty, including whether it is proportionate to the objective to be achieved. Further, the person concerned should be provided with a reasoned decision, in a language that they understand. Amnesty International is not aware that any of these considerations and safeguards have been duly observed with regards to the detainees held at "Gazi Baba".

In January 2015, Amnesty International delegates visited Skopje but were denied permission to enter the center. Amnesty International delegates were allowed to visit the Vizbegovo asylum center on the outskirts of the capital. Only about 30 asylum seekers were being accommodated at that asylum center which has a capacity to accommodate up to 150 people.

**Name: Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in the Reception Centre for Foreigners**  
**Issues: Health concern, Legal concern, Arbitrary detention**

**UA: 46/15**  
**Issue Date: 26 February 2015**  
**Country: Macedonia**